UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1981/C.1/SR.2
26 August 1981

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

First regular session, 1981

FIRST (ECONOMIC) COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 April 1981, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. KOMATINA (Yugoslavia)

CONTENTS

Statistical questions

Population questions

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room A-3550.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

81-55706 1316e (E)

/...

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

STATISTICAL QUESTIONS (E/1981/12)

1. Mr. NORDBOTTEN (Director, Statistical Office) drew the Committee's attention to some of the main issues raised in the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Statistical Commission on its twenty-first session (E/1981/12). A first set of issues concerned the priority which the Statistical Commission was continuing to give to the development and improvement of national statistics, particularly in developing countries and specifically with regard to international statistical standards, recommendations, guidelines, handbooks and technical reports. The Commission had endorsed the recommendations for the 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics and recommended a draft resolution on the subject for adoption by the Council. It was also continuing a programme for developing a framework for environmental statistics and actively promoting the development and co-ordination of technical co-operation activities aimed at improving the statistical capability of developing countries, with particular emphasis on technical co-operation in statistical data processing. That included the provision of technical support in statistical data processing, the development of packaged software for performing major statistical data-processing functions, the provision of advice regarding hardware acquisition and use by developing countries and the general co-ordination of related international activities. As to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, project-formulation missions had been undertaken in 21 of the 35 developing countries which had expressed interest in the Programme since 1980, project proposals for 10 countries had been approved by the Governments concerned and proposals for 8 more countries were nearly completed. In the area of technical co-operation, the Commission had endorsed the arrangement whereby the Statistical Office provided substantive support to the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development on all statistics and data-processing projects.

2. A second set of related issues discussed by the Commission concerned the development of statistics at the national and international levels. In the field of energy statistics, the Commission had recommended to the Council a draft resolution on international energy statistics strongly urging the concerted development of national statistics according to international guidelines and according high priority to the development of new statistics theories in that field at the international level. In the area of social and demographic statistics, the Commission had reaffirmed its support for the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

3. A third set of issues which the Commission had addressed concerned the co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes; co-ordination by the Statistical Office was especially important in such areas as standards and classifications, energy and environment statistics standards, trade and the balance of payments, and public sector and monetary statistics. Moreover, systems that were subordinate to the System of National Accounts and Balances (SNA) must be co-ordinated and consistent with it.

(Mr. Nordbotten)

4. Subject to technical changes and recommended priorities, the Commission had endorsed the proposed 1980-1983 draft work programme (draft decision A) and 1984-1989 medium-term plan of the Statistical Office. Other areas to which the Commission had accorded high priority included the review and further development of SNA and its linking with the system of material product balances; the development, updating and harmonizing of standard international classifications; international trade statistics; price and related statistics; and environment statistics. The Commission had approved the provisional agenda and the proposed documentation for the twenty-second session and had asked that its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination should consider more fully the documentation to be made available to the Commission to enable it to carry out its required functions in relation to the review of the draft work programme and medium-term plan of the Statistical Office and co-ordination among the international agencies and to finalize the draft provisional agenda for the twenty-second session, taking those requirements into account. The Commission had accordingly (draft decision C) requested the Council to extend the ninth session of the Working Group to four days, from 29 September to 2 October 1981. The Commission had also recommended (draft decision B) that its twenty-second session should be held at New York in the first quarter of 1983.

5. In conclusion, he said the Commission felt that a discussion of the future orientation of its work, such as was described in the report on its twenty-first session, should be undertaken periodically in order to keep pace with, and even anticipate, the evolution of the international statistical system. Particular attention should be devoted to the use of administrative records for statistical purposes, the importance of closer contacts between users and producers of international statistics, the necessity of avoiding duplication in international statistical collection and publication activities, the emerging importance of regional and global information networks based on telecomputer technology, the emerging role of commercial organizations in disseminating statistics from the international agencies through computer services, and the need for further study of ways to improve the implementation of international recommendations. The Working Group had accordingly been requested to identify special topics to be taken up by the Commission at its forthcoming session.

6. Mr. VORONIN (Secretary of the Committee) drew the Committee's attention to possible financial implications of two of the decisions adopted by the Statistical Commission. Paragraph 2 of draft resolution II on international energy statistics requested the Secretary-General to accord priority to specific areas of statistical work. It was felt that that request could be met by the redeployment of existing resources, and therefore the matter would be examined further. With regard to draft decision C, he said that the proposal for extending the ninth session of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination to four days should involve no financial implications, as such a provision had already been included in the proposed programme budget for 1980/1981.

7. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the list of speakers on the item should be closed at 6 p.m. that day.

8. It was so decided.

/...

POPULATION QUESTIONS (A/36/117; E/1981/13)

9. Mr. ZIMMERMAN (United States of America) said that his Government recommended acceptace of the Population Commission's report by the Economic and Social Council and strongly supported the draft resolution on the strengthening of actions concerned with the fulfilment of the World Population Plan of Action, which contained specific recommendations for priority action by Governments and regional and international bodies. It also endorsed the resolution on the work programme in the field of population. He reaffirmed his Government's support for the convening of a World Population Conference in 1984 (draft resolution I), which it believed must be cost-effective and substantive. It therefore found fully acceptable the draft resolution's recommendation that the Conference should be conducted "with economy in size of delegations, duration and other cost factors" and be devoted "to the discussion of selected issues of the highest priority".

10. Mr. SALAS (Executive Director, United Nations Fund for Population Activities) said that UNFPA was prepared to present proposals regarding the provision of extrabudgetary resources to its Governing Council in June in the event of the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of the draft resolution calling for the convening of a World Population Conference in 1984. The financial requirements for the Conference would be staggered between 1982 and 1984. Expenditure was expected to be quite minimal, since a joint effort would be made by the secretariats of UNFPA and the Population Council to meet most of the manpower requirements with the existing regular staff of the two organizations. Since the 1974 World Population Conference, much work had been carried out in the field of population, and an assessment of what had been achieved under the World Population Plan of Action over the decade was required. Moreover, there were regional differences that needed review in the light of the tremendous operational activities that had taken place in 131 countries and territories throughout the world. He thanked the Population Division and the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs for the co-operation which they had extended to UNFPA.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.